

CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP

October 25, 2000 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Review of August 23 and September 27 meeting notes

No revisions were made to the August 23 or September 27, 2000, CALFED Ops meeting notes.

Announcements

The Group discussed whether there was the need for more frequent CALFED Ops Group meetings over the next few months. The purpose of additional meetings is to facilitate the development of an operations plan for water year 2001 that incorporates both (b)(2) and EWA actions. The Ops Group concluded that meetings, in addition to the scheduled ones, may be called as necessary. The next meeting will remain as scheduled on December 6, 2000. However, an Operations and Fisheries Forum conference call will be scheduled for November 15, 2000.

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. CALFED Operations Briefing Package, October 25, 2000, DWR, John Leahigh
2. Environmental Water Account Update, October 24, 2000, DWR, Leo Winternitz
3. Fall/Winter Juvenile Salmon Decision Process (Oct 1 – Jan 31), Revised October 25, 2000, USFWS, Marty Kjelson
4. Operations Decision Process Related to Fall/Winter Juvenile Salmon (Oct 1 - Mar 31), draft October 23, 2000, USFWS, Marty Kjelson
5. Draft Summary of Potential (b)(2) Fish Actions for Oct 00 – Sep 2001 Water Year, October 20, 2000, USFWS, Roger Guinee
6. Winter-run Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, and Spring-run Chinook Update, October 25, 2000, NMFS, Bruce Oppenheim
7. Delta Smelt Fall Midwater Trawl Abundance Index, DFG, Jim White

Water Hyacinths

The water hyacinth is an extremely prolific weed, which strives the Delta environment and has created safety hazards for boaters, clogging navigation channels and marinas, as well as water supply pumps and systems. The primary and most successful control measure is chemical spraying using herbicides like 2,4-D (Weedar) and Rodeo. An environmental protection group called DeltaKeeper had filed a lawsuit against Boating and Waterways for alleged violations of federal

Clean Water Act. As a result, Boating and Waterways suspended spraying until such time the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board determines if a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit is necessary. On October 27, 2000, a public meeting is being held to consider adoption of a new NPDES permit. Hyacinths are not much of a problem at the SWP.

Mitten Crab Status

The SWP and CVP have observed chinese mitten crabs only in low numbers this year. Last year, the numbers were also low. The K-rail has been installed again this year.

SWRCB

The SWRCB received the September 25, 2000, notice by the DWR and the USBR that the Export/Inflow ratio was inadvertently exceeded on September 20th and 21st. In addition, the SWRCB received the October 10, 2000, letter from Environmental Defense suggesting that twice the amount of the overage be credited to the Environmental Water Account. A response has been drafted by staff and is being reviewed by the Board members.

On October 6, 2000, the SWRCB sent a letter to the DWR, the USBR and the South Delta Water Agency (SDWA) conditionally approving the August 8, 2000, Water Level Response Plan. The Plan was approved for a period of one year. To obtain approval beyond one year, the DWR and the USBR must complete their program of diversion modification, and establish an ongoing program of dredging, to address limited areas with water level problems in the southern Delta. The approval also requires the SDWA to provide specific information in a timely manner to the projects, and to the SWRCB, whenever they make a request for immediate termination pursuant to the Plan.

A draft of the Yuba River Water Right Decision will be considered by the SWRCB at the November 1, 2000, closed workshop. A draft of the decision will be released for public review soon thereafter. A final decision is expected in December.

The SWRCB held three days of hearing in October for the Delta Wetlands project. Many of the issues raised by parties when the matter first came before the SWRCB in 1997 have been resolved by negotiation among the parties. The SWRCB hopes to adopt a decision on the project in the first few months of 2001, after completion of CEQA documentation.

Four water right holders in the southern Delta were inspected in August for compliance with Term 91 of their water right permits. They were asked to provide specific information by October 20 to document their alternate supply. The SDWA responded on behalf of the water right holders claiming: 1) the water users always intended to reserve their riparian rights, even if they never specifically did so in their deeds, 2) the water users might be pre-1914, 3) all water users in the Delta were assumed to be riparian for analytical purposes in the 1956 Cooperative Studies and it would be unfair to consider them otherwise at this late date, and 4) regardless of their actual rights, the Delta Protection Act shields all water users in the Delta and requires that they be provided with an adequate supply of water. The SDWA requested additional time to gather information on chain of title.

Delta Cross Channel Gate Fall Experiment

The second phase of the DCC gate experiment successfully concluded earlier this week. Because of concern about increasing salinity in the Delta, the third phase is being modified. Instead of full closure of the gates for the next portion of the experiment, a partial tidal closure will be tested. The modified goal for the third phase is to determine if opening the gates during one flood-tide cycle will be as effective as opening the gates during both flood-tide cycles. The third phase of the gate closure experiment will be completed on November 8. The fish sampling portion of the experiment will continue beyond November 8 with the release of radio tagged juvenile salmon near the Cross Channel. Sampling in Georgiana Slough and near the cross channel gates will be used to monitor the movement of the salmon.

Juvenile Salmon Protection Plan

The DAT is continuing to develop a plan to protect all races of juvenile salmon emigrating in the October through January period. An updated decision tree chart detailing the process to trigger actions or make specific recommendations was presented at the Ops Group meeting. Comments should be sent to Marty Kjelson or Curtis Creel. The accompanying narrative for the chart is being drafted and will be finalized by the DAT.

Environmental Water Account Implementation

A summary of the EWA asset acquisitions was provided at the Ops Group meeting. Concern about the lack of any opportunity to provide input was conveyed by both water user and environmental stakeholders. It was noted that a forum for input will be provided through an OFF meeting that will be held on November 15, as well as a

public workshop scheduled for November 21. Details on both meetings will follow. DWR also acknowledged that it will develop a website for the EWA that may be accessed from the Ops Group website.

OFF and DAT Update

The DAT is meeting by conference call once a week. There are no fish concerns yet. Fish have been surveyed in the Mill and Deer creeks, but none in the Sacramento River system. Survey data is being updated twice a day on a website not available to the public yet. It is an automatic system. The address will be sent out through the email reflector.

OPERATIONS

CVP/SWP Operations Status:

The current State and Federal reservoir levels and export rates were presented as per the CALFED Operations Briefing Package handout. Delta outflow should be about 3,500 to 4,500 cfs early next month. DWR will begin operating the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gates in early November.

The Merced water transfer began in October. The transfer is to Reclamation, which will provide the water for level 4 refuge needs south of the Delta. It is anticipated that up to 25 TAF may be exported by the end of November.

Temporary Barriers

The HORB has been in place for a few weeks. Three culverts have been opened. Modeling studies indicate three more culverts should be opened.

South Delta Dredging

The South Delta dredging project has slowed by unforeseen debris problems and will not be completed until November 30. So far, three pumps have been damaged by debris. As a result of the delays and equipment failures, project costs have risen from the original estimate of \$1.3 million to about \$2 million.

Fishery Status

Salmon: NMFS provided a handout detailing the status of winter-run chinook salmon, steelhead and spring-run chinook. There have been no winter-run salmon in the last 3 weeks.

Splittail: Nothing to report.

Delta Smelt: Fall Mid-water Trawl Abundance Index chart was presented and discussed.

Agenda items for Next Meeting . . . December 6, 2000

Weather Prediction by Bill Mork (if there is room on the yet-to-be-decided agenda)